



Evelyn Totenhofer treating a poisoned hand, Solomon Islands.

Photo courtesy of South Pacific Division Heritage Centre.

Totenhofer, Evelyn Rachel (1894–1977)

MILTON HOOK

Milton Hook, Ed.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States). Hook retired in 1997 as a minister in the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. An Australian by birth Hook has served the Church as a teacher at the elementary, academy and college levels, a missionary in Papua New Guinea, and as a local church pastor. In retirement he is a conjoint senior lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored *Flames Over Battle Creek*, *Avondale: Experiment on the Dora*, *Desmond Ford: Reformist Theologian*, *Gospel Revivalist*, the *Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series*, and many magazine articles. He is married to Noeleen and has two sons and three grandchildren.

Evelyn Totenhofer was known affectionately as Nurse Totenhofer. She served as a nurse at the time of the establishment of the Batuna Mission Station in the Solomon Islands, and then for thirty years as the nurse for

Pitcairn Island.

Evelyn Rachel Totenhofer was born in Hobart, Tasmania, on May 21, 1894 to August and Anna (Stellmacher) Totenhofer.¹ Her siblings were Lilian Augusta (b.1887), George Edgar (b.1888), Reuben Mark (b.1890), Sydney Augustus (b.1893), Howard Earl (b.1896) and Eric Martin (b.1899). They adopted another daughter, Peggy (b.1900). August was a farmer.² It was Mendel Israel who brought August and Anna to Seventh-day Adventism about 1890, all the children, therefore, being raised in the same faith.³

As a teenager Evelyn attended the Australasian Missionary College (AMC), 1912 through 1915, and then advanced to the Sydney Sanitarium to train as a nurse.⁴ She completed her studies successfully and graduated in 1920.⁵

A Career in Nursing

After her graduation Evelyn did some short-term assignments for the denomination, first in Western Australia, then as matron at AMC followed by clinical work linked to the Sydney Health Food cafe.⁶

In 1925 Evelyn began her lengthy overseas mission service. She was appointed to Batuna in the Solomon Islands where a clinic was established at the headquarters mission station. She busied herself by entering into all the station activities.⁷ She conducted singing classes and began the study of the local language.⁸ She supervised the young women at the training school in addition to conducting her clinic during the hours of 7:00-9:00 a.m. and 4:30-5:30 p.m.⁹ Prevalent cases included patients with influenza, malaria, tuberculosis, flesh wounds and childbirth.¹⁰ She continued her work for seventeen years until the Japanese invasion during World War II necessitated evacuation to Australia.¹¹

During the War years a different mission assignment was found for Evelyn. A need arose for a nurse to be stationed on Pitcairn Island, an area unlikely to be endangered by military activities. She embarked on the lengthy voyage via New Zealand in 1943,¹² arriving safely to be ready to attend to medical emergencies and child births. On June 11, 1947, she married Leonard Elwyn Christian in the Pitcairn Island church and remained there for the next thirty years in her ministry as island nurse.¹³

Evelyn died on May 12, 1977, after slipping into a few days of unconsciousness. A passing ship's crew, recognising the enormity of the island's loss, delayed their departure to enable them to attend the funeral services. She was buried in the Pitcairn Island cemetery, mourned by the islanders who loved her as "a great and good woman."¹⁴ Four years later, on September 27, 1981, Leonard Christian died.¹⁵

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NOTES

1. "Evaline Rachel Totenhofer," FamilySearch.org. <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q27M-D733>.

2. "Evelyn Rachel Totenhoper," FamilySearch.org. Intellectual Reserve, 2020, accessed February 14, 2020, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/find/name?search=1&gender=female&birth=Tasmania%2CAustralia%7C1892-1895%7C0&self=evelyn%7Ctotenhofer%7C0%7C0>. Note: Variants exist for most names in this German family. Evelyn is sometimes called Eveline and the surname is variously Todtenhoefer, Totenhoefer, and Totenhoper.

3. E[dwin] G. Whittaker, "August Totenhofer," *Australasian Record*, August 1, 1927, 7.

4. W[allace] R. Ferguson, "Life Sketch of Mrs Evelyn Christian," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, July 25, 1977, 11.

5. Hilda M. Osmond, "Graduating Exercises of the Sydney Sanitarium," *Australasian Record*, November 15, 1920, 6.
6. W[allace] R. Ferguson, "Life Sketch of Mrs Evelyn Christian," *Australasian Record And Advent World Survey*, July 25, 1977, 11.
7. Evelyn R. Totenhofer, "Play Follows Work," *Australasian Record*, October 26, 1925, 3-4.
8. "Writing from Batuna Training School..." *Australasian Record*, July 6, 1925, 8.
9. Evelyn R. Totenhofer, "Batuna School, Solomon Islands," *Australasian Record*, June 28, 1926, 4.
10. Evelyn R. Totenhofer, "A Busy Time at Batuna School, Solomon Islands," *Australasian Record*, November 22, 1926, 4; "Nurse Totenhofer writes..." *Australasian Record*, January 20, 1930, 8.
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15. "Evelyn Rachel Totenhofer," FamilySearch.org. Intellectual Reserve, 2020, accessed February 14, 2020, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:LHKS-D9Z>.

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